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Bush: 'Confidence Itself'

George Bush, a versatile, witty and energetic Texan, has finally announced his presidential candidacy. He is a bit overdue. No Republican aspirant started earlier than Bush. In 1978 alone, he toured 42 states laying down the nourishment for the grass roots he claims will get him the nomination in 1980.

No one in the present pack is more qualified than Bush, 54. He's been businessman (oil drilling); politician (congressman, national GOP chairman); diplomat (ambassador to the U.N. and U.S. representative to the People's Republic of China); bureaucrat (CIA director); and teacher (adjunct professor, Rice Institute).

His father was a respected U.S. senator from Connecticut. Bush was graduated from the best schools—Phillips Academy and Yale. He's wealthy, handsome and very likable, well known among professional Republicans, but nowhere in the polls.

"I can't worry about every damned poll," Bush says. "I don't start with name identification, I start with credentials. One is my ability to get good people to work with me in the states. Right now, we have the best organization of any candidate in the primary states."

Bush cites Iowa, where the first presidential balloting takes place, as a plus state for him. When he recites details of his recent Iowa tour, it sounds like a rundown of pleasant, Middle-America towns where, a generation ago, the most exciting thing to do on Saturday night was to watch haircuts. So while Reagan dominates and Connally climbs, Bush is satisfied to work the country, county by county, and become "everybody's second choice." Being the undisputed second man, and having fair numbers liking him first, is "real strength," he argues, because it shows "my ability to unify."

His staff reflects this strategy. Bush startled polls by hiring George Wallace's presidential campaign manager, Charles Snyder. Some Washington eyebrows went up; too, when he signed on Sue Morrison, from the Democratic National Committee where she was communications director. He's also got one of Reagan's former top aides, David Keene; James A. Baker III, who was Ford's 1976 campaign manager as campaign chairman; Bob Mosbacher, socialite, winner of international yachting competition, former Ford campaign official, and now Bush's finance chairman.

Though Bush was tardy to announce formally, he

lic to qualify for federal matching campaign funds for 1980. He did this by raising \$5,000 or more (no contribution more than \$250) in each of 20 states. All told, Bush has \$663,000 in his campaign fund, about half the amount John Connally's campaign reports, and two-fifths of Phil Crane's \$1.7 million. Front-runner Reagan has collected \$527,000, and will go for the big money later.

Anyway, Bush's views on issues put him on the right, although he once said: "I want conservatism to be sensitive and dynamic, not scared and reactionary."

He sees inflation as the key issue, and urges quick passage of "sunset" laws empowered to terminate many federal programs. He believes a tax cut is no good unless there is an equally important cut in federal spending, and he says the Carter administration's faulty energy program has fired inflation even more.

Bush argues that we might be over-regulating coal, that despite the Three Mile Island accident, nuclear development must continue and that more leadership of the kind Carter showed in visiting the Three Mile Island plant is sorely needed.

"Regrettably, Carter is a totally ineffective leader," Bush says. "There is a mounting perception of incompetence in his administration, a feeling he is not up to the job. He vacillated on Taiwan, on the shah of Iran, on deploying the neutron weapon and on Cuba. He's really weak on Africa. How can we hold back Rhodesia for two Marxist-Leninist leaders, Nkomo and Mugabe, who are like piranhas in the bathtub?"

"On inflation, if it remains double-digit, Carter will go to wage and price controls, and loosen up federal spending to satisfy liberals. Teddy Kennedy harasses him from the left, and that plagues Carter."

Bush seems like confidence itself. "I've always been a leader," he says, without a trace of Texas accent, though he's lived there 30 years. "I was the youngest [18] navy combat pilot in World War II. I was captain of my baseball team [National Champions] at Yale. I was one of the few Republicans to get elected in Texas. And I'm glad I ran the CIA. It's a monumental plus because people in this country want a CIA and an FBI. And I'm glad I served in China because that's paying off for us, too."

"I'm going all-out in this presidential thing because we've got to get people feeling pride and confidence in their country again."

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